HOSEA 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ephraim Punished	Judgment of Israel's Sin	Israel has rejected the LORD and must undergo punishment that will bring loss of king, children, places of worship, and country (9:1-11:12)	Hosea Announces Punishment for Israel	The Sorrows of Exile
9:1-6 (1-6)	9:1-2 (1-2)	9:1-17 (1-3)	9:1-6	9:1-6 (1-6)
	9:3-6 (3-4)	(4)		Persecution, the Prophet's Reward for Foretelling Punishment
	(5-6)	(5-6)		
9:7-9 (7-9)	9:7-9 (7-9)	(7-9)	9:7-9	9:7-9 (7-9)
			Israel's Sin and Its Consequences	Punishment for the Crime at Baal-Peor
9:10-14 (10-14)	9:10-16 (10-13)	(10-14)	9:10-12	9:10-14 (10-14)
	(14)		9:13-14	
			The Lord's Judgment on Israel	Gilgal
9:15-17 (15-17)	(15-16)	(15)	9:15-16	9:15-17 (15-17)

	(16-17)	The Prophet Speaks About Israel
9:17 (17)		9:17-10:8

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 9:1-6

[1]Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations!
For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.
You have loved *harlots'* earnings on every threshing floor.
[2]Threshing floor and wine press will not feed them,
And the new wine will fail them.
[3]They will not remain in the LORD'S land,
But Ephraim will return to Egypt,
And in Assyria they will eat unclean *food*.
[4]They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD,
Their sacrifices will not please Him.
***Their bread will be* like mourners' bread;**
All who eat of it will be defiled, For their bread will be for themselves *alone*;
It will not enter the house of the LORD.
[5]What will you do on the day of the appointed festival
And on the day of the feast of the LORD?
[6]For behold, they will go because of destruction;
Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them.
Weeds will take over their treasures of silver;
Thorns *will be* in their tents.

9:1 "Do not rejoice" This verse may reflect a harvest festival (cf. Hos. 9:5). These times were the occasion of Ba'al praise and worship (initiation magic). YHWH will turn their promiscuous festivals into funeral dirges!

This VERB (DBD 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 856) means "rejoice" or "delight" (cf. Hos. 7:3). Israel was acting like just another of the "nations" (BDB 766).

This is the first of several cultic words:

1. rejoice, Hos. 9:1
2. exultation, Hos. 9:1
3. libations, Hos. 9:4
4. sacrifices, Hos. 9:4
5. day of the appointed festival, Hos. 9:5

But, the bottom line was Hos. 9:1b, "you have played the harlot, forsaking your God." Wailing was appropriate (cf. Isa. 22:12-14), not rejoicing!

We need to take a lesson on worship from the Jews. Their worship times were events of great joy in the goodness of God and His creation. In this context, however, God informed them that exaltation is inappropriate because of His impending judgment on their idolatry. In the OT (Deuteronomy especially) prosperity is a sign of God's blessing, but in this historical setting it was a deceptive, short-term situation. Israel was trapped in ritual and idolatry and YHWH will discipline her (like He will Judah for the same actions, e.g., Jeremiah 2; Ezekiel 23).

▣ **"like the nations!"** This was the problem (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5)! They had turned the worship of YHWH into a form of the Canaanite Ba'al worship.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANE

▣ **"you have played the harlot"** They were practicing the fertility worship of the Canaanite pantheon. They were committing physical adultery and spiritual adultery (e.g., Hos. 1:2; 4:10,13,14,15,18[twice]; 5:3; 9:1) in YHWH's name!

▣ **"loved *harlots'* earning"** Israel's love (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT) is directed toward "a harlot's hire" (BDB 1071, cf. Hos. 2:5,12). The same VERB is used of foreign alliances in Hos. 8:10. It is very difficult to know if this is literal or figurative.

▣ **"on every threshing floor"** This (BDB 175) was the site of separating the grain from the husk. It was usually on the top of hills so that as the grain was thrown into the air the wind would blow away the lighter husk and the heavier grain would fall into a pile. These harvest places were the sites of extravagant celebrations (cf. Genesis 38). Because fertility worship was a form of initiation magic, this was the very site the sexual activity occurred (e.g., Hos. 4:11-14). But notice YHWH's reaction in Hos. 9:2,11,14,16!

9:2 YHWH, not Ba'al, was the source of fertility (cf. Hos. 2:16).

9:3 "They will not remain in the LORD's land" The Promised Land (e.g., Lev. 25:23; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Ezek. 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6), and for that matter, all land, belongs to YHWH (e.g., Exod. 9:29; 19:5). YHWH prophesied the cleansing of His land of Amorites in Gen. 15:16. If His people do the same abominations He will remove them also (cf. Lev. 18:24-28). They did, He did!

▣ **"But Ephraim will return to Egypt"** When one compares Hos. 7:8,11,16; 8:13 and this passage with Hos. 11:5, there seems to be a contradiction. Egypt probably is symbolic of slavery (i.e., exile in Assyria). However, some scholars see it as a reference to political alliance. Hoshea, the last king of Israel, appealed to Egypt for help against Assyria.

▣ **"Assyria"** This is a specific reference to the exile that occurred to the Northern Ten Tribes in 722 B.C. with the fall of Samaria (cf. Hos. 8:9-10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KINGS OF ASSYRIA

▣ **"they will eat unclean *food*"** Exile will bring a stop to many of their cultic rituals. The development of the synagogue will preserve their traditions, but many of the Levitical ordinances will be impossible to do without an active temple (cf. Hos. 9:4-5). Ezekiel 4:13 implies that bread, eaten in a foreign land is unclean!

9:4 "They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD" It must be remembered that fermented wine was a part of the sacrificial system and, therefore, not considered to be corrupt (cf. Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:1-10; Ps. 104:14-15). The reason that the sacrifices of Hos. 9:3-4 are unclean is because they are in a foreign land.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

▣ **"mourners' bread"** This (BDB 536 CONSTRUCT BDB 19) is a metaphor of corruption. It was defiled because it was associated with the dead. It was made out of barley, usually eaten by the poor. It was also unclean because it was made and eaten in Assyria.

9:5 "What will you do on the day of the appointed festival" This was a question to jar them into reality. Their worship was about to be totally disrupted and their population deported!

9:6 "Egypt will gather them up
Memphis will bury them" Memphis (BDB 592) is the capital of Lower Egypt and we learn from archaeological discovery that it was the site of an extremely large burial area (VERB BDB 868, KB 1064, *Piel* IMPERFECT). The meaning is

1. the survivors of the exiles will die in large numbers in exile and slavery (i.e., as in Egypt)
2. those survivors who flee to Egypt will die there

▣ **"Weeds will take over their treasures of silver"** There are two basic theories concerning "their treasures of silver":

1. it refers to idols and, therefore, the misuse of holy places
2. it refers to their extravagant houses and, therefore, the destruction of their opulent society (cf. Hos. 8:14)
3. because of Hos. 9:2 and Isa. 7:23, it may be a metaphor for their vineyards

▣ **"Thorns *will be* in their tents"** This is metaphorical of their empty houses or it is another reference to their worship shrines (cf. Hos. 10:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 9:7-9

7The days of punishment have come,
The days of retribution have come;
Let Israel know *this*!
The prophet is a fool,
The inspired man is demented,
Because of the grossness of your iniquity,
And *because* your hostility is so great.
8Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a prophet;
***Yet* the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways,**
And there is only hostility in the house of his God.
9They have gone deep in depravity
As in the days of Gibeah;

He will remember their iniquity,
He will punish their sins.

9:7 "The days of punishment" This means "visitation" (BDB 824 CONSTRUCT BDB 398). This is a neutral term, but because of the context (parallelism of line 2), it means visitation for the purpose of judgment and that judgment is now (i.e., "have come" repeated).

▣ **"The days of retribution"** The prophets often use the courtroom metaphor to communicate truth. This refers to a judicial decision (BDB 1024 CONSTRUCT BDB 398). It can mean guilty or not guilty. Because of the context, it refers to God's imminent judgment.

▣ **"Let Israel know *this*"** This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used in a JUSSIVE (command) sense. Israel claimed to know in Hos. 8:2, but obviously they did not know Him or His prophet!

▣ **"The prophet is a fool,**
The inspired man is demented" These two lines of parallel poetry are difficult to translate. This seems to be the people's response to Hosea's message (same word used in Jer. 29:36). Apparently they were trying to associate him with the earlier ecstatic prophetic groups (cf. 1 Sam. 10:6ff) and thereby ridicule his message. God's word was strange to them because of the depth of their sin (cf. Hos. 8:12).

David A. Hubbard, Hosea (Tyndale OT Commentaries), p. 159, makes an interesting comment about "the inspired man," which is literally "the man of the spirit." He asserts that it is used in a negative sense because of Hosea's use of "spirit" in such negative ways (cf. Hos. 4:12,19; 5:4).

For "fool" see SPECIAL TOPIC: FOOLISH PEOPLE

▣

NASB	**"Because of the grossness of your iniquity"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"Because of the greatness of your iniquity"**
NRSV, REB	**"Becuase of your great iniquity"**
TEV	**"your sin is so great"**
NJB	**"great is your guilt"**

The last two poetic lines of Hos. 9:7 are a summary of the cause of Israel's coming exile. They do not know God or His law!

The term "grossness" (BDB 913) means "multitude" or "abundance." It is used of God's laws in Hos. 8:12, but here of Israel's sins.

▣

NASB	**"*Because* your hostility is so great"**
NKJV, REB	**". . .and great enmity"**
NRSV	**". . .your hostility is great"**
TEV	**"You people hate me so much because your sin is so great"**
NJB	**"all the greater then the hostility"**
Peshitta	**"your lasciviousness has been increased"**

The NOUN "hostility (BDB 966) expresses a settled enmity and grudge against God and His spokespersons. It is used only in Hosea 9:7 and 8.

9:8

NASB, LXX	**"Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a prophet"**

NKJV, NJB	**"The watchman of Ephraim *is* with my God"**
NRSV	**"The prophet is a sentinel for my God over Ephraim"**
TEV	**"God has sent me as a prophet to warn his people Israel"**

This Hebrew phrase is very ambiguous. There are three theories:

1. Ephraim was meant to be God's representative (cf. Exod. 19:5-6)
2. Ephraim was persecuting God's prophet
3. there is a possibility that it could refer to Ephraim following false prophets (Peshitta)

Hosea expresses how he sees himself, a prophet, a watchman, a true and obedient covenant man.

▣ **"the snare of a bird catcher is in all his ways"** The next two lines of poetry seem to describe Israel's opposition to God's message by attacking the messenger. God's people who need and should welcome God's message are filled with hostility instead of eager receptiveness!

▣ **"in the house of his God"** This could refer to some YHWHistic shrine (i.e., Bethel or Dan), but it may refer to the whole land (cf. Hos. 8:1; 9:4,15).

9:9

NASB	**"They have gone deep in depravity"**
NKJV, Peshitta, NRSV	**"They are deeply corrupted themselves"**
TEV	**"they are hopelessly evil"**
NJB, JPSOA	**"they have become deeply corrupt"**
REB	**"They are deep in sin"**

The two VERBS of this line of poetry:

1. make deep – BDB 770, KB 847, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. spoil, ruin – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Piel* PERFECT

function together as a hendiadys, where the second VERB is the main idea and the first serves as an ADVERB. This term, spoil, is used of the spiritual condition of those who worshiped at

1. the golden calf Aaron made in Exod. 32:7; Deut. 9:12; 32:5
2. of the Israelites at the golden calves of Jeroboam I, Hosea 9:9
3. of Judah in Isa. 1:4; Jer. 6:28; Ezek. 20:44; 23:11; Zeph. 3:7
4. of human nature in general in Ps. 14:1; 53:1

▣ **"in the days of Gibeah"** There is a list of historical allusions beginning in Hos. 9:9 and running through chapter 10. These are linked to specific cities and the idolatry that occurred in them. Gibeah is mentioned in Hos. 10:9.

There are several possibilities:

1. this was Saul's home
2. this was the site of Saul's first sin (cf. 1 Sam. 13:8-14)
3. this refers to the events of Judges 19-21
4. modern interpreters are uncertain of the exact historical reference

▣ **"He will remember"** When God "remembers" it is a reference to judgment. Humans call on God to forget! God calls on humans to remember the covenant (cf. Hos. 7:2; 8:13; 13:12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 9:10-14

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*.
***But* they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,**
And they became as detestable as that which they loved.
11 As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird—

No birth, no pregnancy and no conception!
12Though they bring up their children,
Yet I will bereave them until not a man is left.
Yes, woe to them indeed when I depart from them!
13Ephraim, as I have seen,
Is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre;
But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter.
14Give them, O LORD—what will You give?
Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

9:10 "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. . .the earliest fruit of the fig tree" YHWH found fruitfulness and potential in Abraham's descendants. This is another example of the Jews idealizing the wilderness wandering period as a time of Israel's courtship and honeymoon with God (cf. Hos. 2:14-19; Deut. 32:10). This is an explanation of God's choice of Israel, beginning not with Abraham or the Patriarchs, but with the Exodus (Moses).

▣ **"Baal-peor"** This refers to Shittim on the Plains of Moab (BDB 128), where Israel apostatized with the Moabite women in fertility worship. This was Balaam's advice to the Moabite king on how to defeat Israel (cf. Num. 25:1-9). This is possibly referred to in Hos. 5:2 and the same terminology is in Hos. 9:9a. This place became a symbol of rebellion and idolatry (e.g., Deut. 4:3-4; Joshua 22:17; Ps. 106:28; and here.)

▣ **"devoted themselves to shame"** This VERB (BDB 634, KB 684, *Niphal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) means "to vow" or "to make a promise." As Israel committed herself to God at Sinai (cf. Exod. 19-20), it was not too long until she committed herself to Ba'al at Shittim.

The term "shame" is a common term to denote idolatry (BDB 103). It was used by the prophets as another name for Ba'al. Israel broke her devotion to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19-20) and went after Ba'al! The honeymoon was over! See SPECIAL TOPIC: SHAME

It is parallel to "detestable" (BDB 1055), which also refers to idolatry (cf. Deut. 29:17; 2 Kgs. 23:13,24; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 4:1; 7:30; 32:34; Ezek. 5:11; 7:20; 11:18,21; 20:7,8,30; 32:23).

9:11 "Ephraim" This name means "fruitful." It was a name used for the Northern Ten Tribes because it was the largest tribe in Israel. The "fruitful" will become the unfruitful! The blessing of God will be revoked because of covenant disobedience (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

▣ **"their glory will fly away like a bird"** Their glory refers to their covenant relationship with YHWH (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Amos 3:2).

Hosea uses birds in several different senses.

1. Israel like a silly dove (political alliances) – Hos. 7:11
2. Israel like a trembling dove (shocked returnees) – Hos. 11:11
3. vulture/eagle of judgment – Hos. 8:1
4. netted birds (judgment) – Hos. 5:1; 7:12
5. escaped bird – Hos. 9:11

▣ **"No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception"** Ironically, they thought fertility came from Ba'al but, in reality, it came from YHWH and in judgment all fertility will cease (cf. Hos. 9:14. 16). This is the result of covenant disobedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deteronomy 28).

9:12 "woe to them indeed when I depart from them" God will leave them as He did Judah in Ezekiel 10:18ff. What a horrible, ultimate judgment (cf. Hos. 4:17; and Rom. 1:23,26,28). This is

an example of a funeral lament (woe),which is another characteristic metaphor and poetic beat used by the prophets.

9:13 "Is planted in a pleasant meadow like Tyre" There are several theories (See Hubbard, Hosea, p. 166) about this passage:

1. it is a reference to Tyre's fertility (cf. Ezek. 27:28)
2. Tyre is referred to as the source of Ba'al worship (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:31)
3. that Ephraim spread out geographically as far as Tyre

▣ **"But Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter"** This seems to refer to

1. child sacrifice to Molech (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35)
2. false faith in Ba'al will result in YHWH's judgment on human fertility (cf. Hos. 9:11,12,14,16)

9:14 The VERB "give" (BDB 678, KB 733) is used sarcastically three times in this verse.

1. *Qal* IMPERATIVE – give them!
2. *Qal* IMPERFECT – what will You give?
3. *Qal* IMPERATIVE – give them. . .!

This seems to be the prophet Hosea praying to YHWH to give Israel what she deserves (i.e., no fertility, the punishment fits the sin, fertility idolatry).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 47, has an interesting suggestion about this line. The author, Robert B. Chisholm, speculates that the ancient blessing of Jacob to Joseph, which used the term "breast and womb" to denote fertility, is here intentionally used to seek non-fertility as a punishment for Israel's seeking after the fertility idols!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 9:15-17

15All their evil is at Gilgal; Indeed,
I came to hate them there!
Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house!
I will love them no more;
All their princes are rebels.
16Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up,
They will bear no fruit.
Even though they bear children,
I will slay the precious ones of their womb.
17My God will cast them away
Because they have not listened to Him;
And they will be wanderers among the nations.

9:15 "All their evil is at Gilgal" Gilgal means "a circle of stones." This was

1. the site of Joshua's memorial of the stones taken from the Jordan River
2. it is also the place of Saul's anointing (cf. 1 Sam. 11:14-15). Hosea seems to condemn the monarchy (cf. Hos. 7:3-7; 8:4, 10, 13; 13:9-11)
3. this was the place of Saul's sin (cf. 1 Sam. 13:1-14)
4. it may have been a site in the north where fertility worship was practiced

▣ **"I came to hate them there"** This is strong language ("hate" BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT) describing YHWH's reaction to sin (e.g., Deut. 12:31; Isa. 63:3-6; Jer. 12:8; Amos 5:21; 6:8).

▣ **"I will drive them out of My house. . .I will love them no more"** Oh my, what a judgment! The covenant is broken. God has divorced Israel for her unfaithfulness. She is sent from God's house (i.e., the Promised Land).

This last phrase, "I will love them no more" is a combination of:

1. "do again" or "do more" (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE in form)
2. "love" (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

YHWH is finished with Israel!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO OT COVENANT PROMISES SEEM SO DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES?

▣ **"All their princes are rebels"** Their leaders were meant to be God's representatives, but they were rebellious.

9:17 "My God will cast them away" Notice Hosea calling YHWH, "My God," with the implication that He is no longer Israel's covenant God (cf. Deut. 31:16-18).

The VERB (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can mean "reject," "despise," or "destroy." It is used in Hosea in Hos. 4:6 (twice) and here. They "reject" His Law (cf. Hos. 8:12; Isa. 5:24; 30:9,12; Jer. 6:19; 8:9; Ezek. 5:6; 20:16; Amos 2:4); He rejects them (cf. Jer. 33:24).

▣ **"Because they have not listened to Him"** It is not Assyria's and Babylonia's strength, but Israel's sin that caused the exile. The Mesopotamian gods are not stronger than YHWH. YHWH uses them to judge His people (e.g., Isa. 10:5; 44:28-45:7).

▣ **"they will be wanderers among the nations"** This is the fulfillment of the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 27-29 (cf. Deut. 28:58-68)!

| Home | Old Testament Studies | Hosea Table of Contents | Previous Section | Next Section |

Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International